



Congressman

Ted Deutch

Serving Florida's 22nd District

OPENING UP AMERICA AGAIN CONGRESSIONAL GROUP: NEXT STEPS

April 27, 2020

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT,

Thank you for the invitation to submit the enclosed memorandum as part of the Opening Up America Again Congressional Group. As we consider next steps, we cannot limit our planning to immediate actions that will get Americans back to work. It is time to start now to address long-term challenges and systemic weaknesses that have put so many Americans at risk. We must all work together to protect the health and economic wellbeing of the American people.

Nearly one million people have tested positive for COVID-19 in the United States, and over 55,000 have lost their lives. All Americans are facing hardships associated with this crisis. Without approved treatments or a vaccine, Americans have been asked to stay home from work and school and apart from loved ones, and tens of millions have lost their jobs.

As we contemplate next steps at this critical moment, I ask that you prioritize the public health response to prevent renewed outbreaks. If we do not reopen our economy safely, both the economic and human costs will continue to rise. Protecting Americans from COVID-19 will require businesses and consumers to become partners in infection control, continued financial support for workers, businesses, and families, empowering all Americans to contribute to our recovery, helping students continue to learn and develop into young leaders, leading globally to expand our economy and bolster our safety at home, and protecting voters in the 2020 election.

I am grateful for the constituents, health professionals, business leaders, and fellow elected representatives who have helped inform my views and reaffirm my belief that we will rise above the challenges before us.

I look forward to working with you and my colleagues in Congress to protect the health and safety of the American people, provide relief to those who have been impacted by COVID-19, and chart a path toward recovery and preparedness for the future.

Sincerely,



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INTRODUCTION

The novel coronavirus pandemic has devastated our economy and our lives; it has also renewed a focus on helping one another and solidified our sense of community and bipartisan spirit. As we make decisions about how to safely reopen our economy, it is vital that we put in place resilient systems capable of detecting outbreaks in communities that can rapidly adapt to safeguard the health and safety of the American people. The implementation of the tools required to operate these systems should be included as gating criteria in the **Opening Up American Again Guidelines**, and state and local governments should be supported and strongly encouraged to fulfill each of the requirements before taking additional steps to reopen businesses in their communities.

As we plan to reopen, we must work to address more than the immediate actions that will get Americans back to work. The federal government must assist businesses, their employees, and their customers to help them become partners in the prevention of renewed outbreaks. We must continue financial support for workers, businesses, and families throughout this crisis, empower all Americans to contribute to the economic recovery, help students continue to learn and develop into our country's next leaders, globally expand our economy and bolster our safety at home, and protect voters and our democracy in the 2020 elections.

PRIORITIZING PUBLIC HEALTH

The federal government's first priority must be continued expansion of testing capacity, reinvigoration of public health infrastructure across federal, state, and local government, development of clear guidelines, logistical support, and technological investment to aid tracing of new cases, and supported isolation to help every American who tests positive for COVID-19 or who comes in contact with a person who tests positive safely quarantine to prevent new outbreaks.

Without detailed plans, protocols, supplies, and support in place, reopening our economy risks undetected community spread of the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) that would require renewed stay at home orders. Communities should not relax mitigation guidelines, including stay at home orders, until the conditions set forth in the Administration's guidelines have been met and the community is past the peak number of infections, there have been at least 14 days with significant reductions in new cases, and the infection rate within the community is low.

Significantly Increase Testing Capacity at the Federal Level

Building on requirements for testing plans in the most recent coronavirus relief law, H.R. 266 (P.L. 116-139), the federal government should coordinate directly with states to implement testing plans, including expansion of testing capacity, organization of laboratory capacity, and removal of barriers to providers sending samples to laboratories with capacity regardless of networks. The implementation of testing plans should be added to the gating criteria under the Opening Up America Again Guidelines.

PRIORITIZING PUBLIC HEALTH

Significantly Increase Testing Quality Controls at the Federal Level

Around the world, doctors, scientists, and public health officials have been baffled by testing that sometimes reveals false positives or false negatives. Inaccurate results can be more dangerous than no results at all if they lull a community into a false belief that the dangers of COVID-19 have passed. The federal government must strengthen oversight of testing validity by FDA. This includes carefully evaluating tests before approval of Emergency Use Authorizations to reduce the chances of false positives.

Provide Additional Guidance about Who, When, and How Often Individuals Should Be Tested

As testing capacity expands, businesses and individuals will need additional guidance about the appropriate type of tests for various situations. Workers will want to know when and how often they should be tested, whether they should seek PCR tests to detect active infections or blood tests to detect antibodies. Access to testing alone is not enough to address the tremendous public health challenges associated with COVID-19, and the federal government should lead the effort to educate the American people about the role they need to play in our national testing strategy.

PRIORITIZING PUBLIC HEALTH

Add Community Infection Rate to the Opening Up America Again Guidelines

At this time, we still do not fully understand how far COVID-19 has spread through our communities. We need a dramatic increase in testing to identify people with mild illness and those who are asymptomatic. Over the course of the past week several testing sites in Florida have begun to expand testing criteria to allow for asymptomatic tests. Additionally, Governor DeSantis announced his plans to make tests available at retail pharmacy locations and workplaces. We must continue to expand testing to make it easier for all members of our community to access tests so that we can understand the silent spread of the disease and, thus, the risk to our communities posed by ending blunt mitigation efforts like Florida's Safer at Home order. A clear understanding of the community infection rate should be included in the Opening Up America Again Guidelines.

Include Testing Capacity as a Criteria in the Opening Up America Again Guidelines

Expansion of testing access should be viewed in terms of per capita testing within a community. One estimate from Harvard suggests that the United States needs 152 tests per 100,000 people to begin reopening. As of April 24, 2020, Florida's peak daily tests was 20,251. That is 94.6 tests per 100,000. This represents an important increase in testing from 47 tests per 100,000 on April 15, but Florida must continue to expand. Meanwhile, across Florida's northern border, Georgia reached 65.8 tests per 100,000 at its peak as of April 24 and has already begun to open nail salons, tattoo parlors, bowling alleys, and other businesses. States, counties, and municipalities need additional guidance to establish the appropriate level of testing in their communities before beginning to reopen.

PRIORITIZING PUBLIC HEALTH

Guarantee that Every Community Has Access to Personal Protective Equipment for Frontline Health Workers and Others

Communities should not begin to reopen until there is enough appropriate personal protective equipment available to frontline health workers treating COVID-19 patients, long-term care facility employees and residents, public health workers carrying out testing, essential workers, returning workers, and members of the community to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The Food and Drug Administration should reassess emergency use authorizations to discourage the reuse of disposable equipment like N-95 respirators as supplies become available. Reopening should not begin if crisis policies are still in place that put health workers and members of the community at risk.

Train State and Local Partners in Proper Contact Tracing

The federal government should lead a national effort to rapidly expand the ability to trace the known contacts of every new confirmed case of COVID-19. The CDC must direct, provide guidance, and support state and local public health departments and should require detailed plans, including estimates of necessary workforce and training resources needed to trace contacts of confirmed cases. In Florida, the state Department of Health has hired 200 additional epidemiologists. The CDC should work closely with the states to ensure that efforts to expand capacity to trace people exposed to individuals with confirmed COVID-19.

PRIORITIZING PUBLIC HEALTH

Leverage High-Risk Individuals for Contact Tracing and Other Public Health Telework

The federal government should consider the impact of protracted time under stay at home orders for older Americans, disabled veterans, and other individuals at high risk from serious complications related to COVID-19. Many high-risk individuals have been forced out of work and recommended to stay home. While many others will begin to return to the workforce, high-risk individuals should be considered as a potential source of public health workforce to aid in contact tracing efforts.

Isolate Identified New Confirmed and Suspected Cases of COVID-19

The federal government should assist states with provision of temporary housing to support voluntary isolation of individuals with confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19. Supporting the isolation of individuals who may be contagious will help prevent the spread of COVID-19 within households and prevent renewed outbreaks. For example, the Florida Division of Emergency Management is working with hotels to prepare accommodations for isolation. Similarly, hotel chains across the country have donated rooms to help support isolation of health care workers who work closely with COVID-19 patients

PRIORITIZING PUBLIC HEALTH

Replenish Hospital Capacity and Federal Preparedness Stockpile

As we pass the peak resource use in hospitals around the country we must immediately begin to plan and prepare for future outbreaks. This includes replenishing the Strategic National Stockpile including PPE, ventilators and other supplies, as well as implementing robust hazard pay, workforce protections, and training programs to ensure we have the nurses, techs, doctors, and other health workers needed to respond to renewed outbreaks. The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response Hospital Preparedness Program budget should be restored after decades of cuts so that hospitals will be prepared to meet the needs of our communities in this and future emergencies.

Engage in a Nationwide Public Health Information Campaign

The federal government should engage in a public information campaign using television, radio, print, and digital advertising to inform the public about the appropriate use of personal protective equipment in various settings and circumstances, to prepare more Americans, especially those who are unfamiliar with PPE, for a return to public life.

Continue to Prioritize Federal Research on COVID-19

The lack of tools like FDA-approved treatments and vaccines have limited our ability to mitigate the impact of community spread of SARS-CoV-2. We need treatments and vaccines to protect Americans from the virus and allow Americans to return to some semblance of normal life. But the hope of scientific developments should not divert attention away from the guidance and best practices currently available. The federal government should apply rigorous scientific evaluation to the study of emerging therapies and be cautious about misleading the public regarding unproven treatments.

REOPENING OUR ECONOMY IN THE FACE OF THE NEW CHALLENGES

The new economy needs to be resilient, able to adapt to changing public health conditions locally, and environmentally sustainable for our long-term future.

Guide States to Categorize and Prioritize Reopening

Businesses should be categorized into levels of contact between employees and their customers. Some types of businesses by their nature operate with higher, more concentrated levels of contact between employees and customers. Such levels of contact need to be considered in the risks that they create for employees and customers. Of course, the more people at a business, the riskier it can be for exposure and transmission of the virus. Different categories of businesses will necessitate different accommodations during the phased reopening. The categories should address the number of customers that can be inside a business at a given time and proximity to each other. For example, the risks posed by restaurants and bars are different from shopping centers and retailers. The public health accommodations needed for gyms, spas, movie theaters, business offices, and manufacturing facilities will likely differ from one another, and informed guidance will be essential to successful reopening.

Protect Employees and Customers in All Reopened Businesses

Steps need to be taken by employers to protect employees and customers from exposure, such as providing PPE for employees; installing transparent barriers between employees and customers; limiting the number of customers permitted to enter an establishment at one time; and ensuring that there is adequate hand sanitizer, paper towels, and other cleaning supplies available to both employees and customers. Again, public health guidance and collaboration will be important to our businesses, their employees, and their customers.

REOPENING OUR ECONOMY IN THE FACE OF THE NEW CHALLENGES

Encourage Additional Public-Private Collaboration to Trace Illness and Meet Pressing Needs

American innovators have already played a key role in our response to the COVID-19 crisis. From setting up systems to help track and measure the spread of the pandemic and its impact in every county across the country, to racing to meet the new demand for ways to stay connected in our work and personal lives, to setting up new systems for tele-health screening and monitoring so that doctors can continue to safely treat patients, we have already seen examples of how innovation can improve all our lives. This innovative spirit must continue and be encouraged by government to meet future demands, such as improving our capacity to trace the virus.

Develop Clear Triggers for the Return to Community Mitigation

The federal government should make clear to the American people that there is a risk of new outbreaks and that those outbreaks may require a return to stay at home orders. The federal government should develop clear guidelines for state and local governments to develop automatic triggers that require a return to community mitigation efforts. Detailed plans about the public health data that will automatically trigger a return to mitigation requirements should be required as gating criteria before moving toward phase one of the Opening Up America Again Guidelines.

REOPENING OUR ECONOMY IN THE FACE OF THE NEW CHALLENGES

Use Next Steps of COVID-19 Recovery Loans and Aid Programs to Rebuild Infrastructure for the Future

The economic shockwave brought on by COVID-19 has reset our expectations of the role of government across the political spectrum. While the federal government rightfully rushed to offer much-needed loans and grants to small businesses and provide life-saving aid to individuals and families, we have the opportunity to strengthen our nation's future prospects if we also consider how to use the rebuilding process to put us on a more environmentally sustainable track. With an eye to the future, we should prioritize and incentivize the repair of crumbling infrastructure and consider environmental sustainability building standards as we do.

Build on Unintended Air Quality Improvements for a Healthier Future

As an unexpected consequence of the massive shift to telework over the past few weeks, many cities have seen notable decreases in air pollution and increases in their air quality. Improvements in air and water quality have proven benefits for public health and our long-term climate future. As we rebuild our economy and help businesses get back to work, we have an opportunity to use American innovation to make a dramatic impact on the health of everyday Americans by leading a green recovery.

BRINGING OUR BUSINESSES BACK FROM THE BRINK

COVID-19 has created unprecedented damage to businesses across the country, from disrupting supply chains and shuttering doors to creating dramatic shifts in consumer behavior. We cannot expect that simply switching the lights back on will bring the American economy back to where it was before this crisis.

Address Growing Business Debt

Small businesses have lost their customers to quarantines. While small businesses are closed or have lost most of their customer base, they still must pay rent, debts, and other overhead payments. The CARES Act (H.R. 6074, P.L. 116-123) was passed to help small businesses; yet, it focused on providing financial assistance that adds debt to small businesses through loans that must be repaid. For example, the EIDL loan for small businesses is available to for-profit businesses at a 3.75% interest rate and must be repaid. The one program that does not add debt to a small business is the Payroll Protection Program (PPP). To reopen, small businesses cannot afford to take on additional debt that will need to be repaid in the near future.

Increase Small Business Payment Relief

Currently, small businesses need relief from rent payments and other expenses. For the economy to quickly reopen, small businesses will need to maintain their prior contracts with vendors and suppliers. If these contracts are not maintained, then small businesses will not be able to reopen quickly. Small businesses are dependent upon these contracts and vendors to purchase products they need for their operations or to sell their products.

BRINGING OUR BUSINESSES BACK FROM THE BRINK

The federal government should consider additional ways to provide immediate access to capital for small businesses. Small businesses will need this capital to pay rent, utilities, employee salaries, employee trainings, purchase new equipment, and other reopening costs. Small businesses will need to have access to low- or no-interest, long-term loans. A loan program should permit small businesses to make repayments over a long period of time. Requirements to repay debt in the short-term will only drive businesses to close. Such a program would be different from the CARES Act, which provides small businesses access to loans that must be repaid over short periods of time, such as loans from the Federal Reserve Main Street Lending Program which must be repaid over four years.

Banks should be encouraged to offer repayment plans for small businesses to pay back their debts on a reasonable payment schedule.

Provide Accurate Reliable Local Information to Inform and Empower Consumers

The success of hotels and other tourism businesses during the reopening of the economy will be dependent upon addressing health concerns that tourists may have for a particular destination. Effective health screenings of employees and customers at hotels and disclosure of health and safety practices of the business to the consumer could help alleviate some of these concerns.

BRINGING OUR BUSINESSES BACK FROM THE BRINK

Help High-Traffic Businesses Get Access to Needed Disinfectants and PPE

While larger businesses and companies likely already have access to PPE and cleaning supplies to keep stores and other businesses clean, smaller businesses may not have those supply chains established, potentially putting their employees and customers at increased risk from COVID-19 without assistance or guidance.

Recommend that Each Phase of State and Local Reopenings Provide Adequate Advance Notice

Businesses that have furloughed or terminated employees will need time before any general reopening. Adequate notice is especially important for workers who have children home from school and daycare that may remain closed for additional time. If a business is unable to reopen at the same time as the local community, it could potentially face additional financial hardship. Our job should be to help states and local communities avoid unnecessary and unintentional pain.

Do Not Assume That All Businesses Can Operate at Half Capacity

Many businesses operate with tight margins and would be incapable of surviving for even a short time open at a limited capacity. Some proposals for reopening suggest that restaurants, movie theaters, and other businesses are allowed to reopen but limit their seating capacity to enable safe social distancing. But not every business can effectively scale down, which means that reopening at partial capacity has the potential to do tremendous additional damages to businesses that are already struggling. The federal government has to acknowledge this and recognize that we may need to offer assistance during the transition.

BRINGING OUR BUSINESSES BACK FROM THE BRINK

Provide Workable Guidance to Businesses for Cleaning and Other Safety Standards

Many businesses are struggling to imagine what a reopening would look like in a world where COVID-19 is still a pressing danger. Gyms and other businesses that operate with close physical proximity and frequent contact need clear guidance about what they need to do to keep their businesses safe and healthy for their patrons and employees. Hotels, casinos, and conference centers that routinely provide services to a mixture of consumers from all over the country and the globe will face very different challenges than businesses tailored to smaller and less heterogenous groups. Consumers are much more likely to return to businesses if they have confidence that they are safe from COVID-19. The past few weeks have shown us that consumers are willing to make dramatic shifts in their established behavior in the name of safety. Simply labeling a business as open may not be enough to convince Americans that they and their families are safe to resume normal life. If businesses reopen without customers, further damage to businesses will be done. Providing clear guidance to businesses and the public will help the transition required in reopening the economy.

Take Proactive Steps to Ensure the Housing Market Remains Stable and Safe

As the economy reopens, it is expected that there will be a surge of people wanting to relocate to a different home or apartment. Others will need to return to their homes. Moving services will need to operate in a safe manner to assist people with their relocations. Assistance must be available to people to prevent them from being disqualified from an apartment if they missed a prior payment on an apartment or home.

BRINGING OUR BUSINESSES BACK FROM THE BRINK

It will be important to provide assistance that will continue the building of single-family homes. The policies should encourage banks with construction loans to work with their borrowers to maximize loan recovery. In addition, the federal government needs to support municipalities and ensure that funding and personnel will be available to manage housing development. These policies will ensure that housing opportunities are available to prospective buyers, will assist Americans who work in the home construction industry, and will support the local economy.

Restructure Airline Flights to Help Make Continued Operations More Economical and Efficient

Airlines are still operating and required to fly during the pandemic. They are flying nearly empty planes across the country which burns cash, is very costly, and has a negative impact on the environment. As an example of the pandemic's impact on the airline industry, South Florida-based Spirit Airlines has been operating 52 flights per day. This is down from operating 600 to 700 flights per day. Less than 25% of the seats on flights are full. The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) should work with airlines on restructuring flights to permit the airlines to decrease service to routes that may not yet be profitable as long as it will not cut off access to a city or region. For example, JetBlue usually ends its route to Palm Springs, CA during the summer. Even before COVID-19, tourism to Palm Springs decreases during the summer because of the high temperatures. However, the CARES Act required JetBlue to reopen and maintain this route during the summer. It does not benefit the economy to have JetBlue flying empty planes to Palm Springs.

BRINGING OUR BUSINESSES BACK FROM THE BRINK

Make Health and Safety Improvements to Restoring Consumer Confidence in Air Travel

It is essential to work to enhance consumer confidence in air travel, specifically traveling in tight spaces. The airline industry has been focused on extra cleanings of the aircraft, customer counters, and cockpits. Aircraft are already outfitted with advanced HEPA-filter systems that exchange the air in the cabin every 40 seconds. However, consumer confidence needs to be restored throughout the chain of air travel – from visiting the rental car agency, to taking a shuttle bus to the terminal, to standing in crowded TSA lines, to walking through crowded terminals, and then boarding flights.

Test and Screen Airline Passengers

While they are not adequate on their own, temperature checks and screenings of passengers before they board a plane, would improve safety overall and help make passengers feel more comfortable flying. However, TSA or airline crew members would need to be trained to check temperatures and screen passengers for COVID-19 and have robust access to PPE. Airports will need to have professional staff available that have adequate training to check passenger temperatures and screen for the virus.

BRINGING OUR BUSINESSES BACK FROM THE BRINK

Address Long-term Impacts of Business Shifts to Telework

The future of the office leasing industry could be greatly impacted by the pandemic. During the quarantine, many businesses have found that their employees have remained productive working from home, and in some cases production has increased. This is causing businesses to reassess their need to rent large office space. A decrease in office space leasing would impact urban areas and urban businesses that rely on the business crowds, including restaurants. As businesses shift their workforce to the suburbs or continue to emphasize telework, high speed internet will need to be readily accessible, security of work systems will need to be improved, and other services that improve telework productivity will need to be supported and implemented.

Provide Targeted Relief to Impacted Independent Retailers

During the COVID-19 pandemic, people have been using e-commerce to purchase products. The impact on physical retail shops as the economy reopens will continue to be significant. Many storefront properties will close or not reopen without financial assistance. Through necessity, consumers have focused their spending for products on e-commerce. As we reopen the economy, it will be critical to develop programs that support independent retailers that are so important to our local economies and our communities.

HELPING ENSURE EVERY AMERICAN IS READY TO CONTRIBUTE

Just as we cannot assume that reopening businesses will undo the economic damage caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, we must also focus on the impact COVID-19 has had on our families, our communities, and every American. This will mean taking a hard look at who has been left out of prior COVID-19 emergency relief efforts and what systemic challenges have created disparate impacts on certain communities and individuals.

Create New Recurring Relief Payments

The Cares Act provided a one-time payment of up to \$1,200 to most Americans including \$500 per child under 17 years old. As this crisis continues, we should consider additional direct payments to help Americans be able to afford rent, pay their bills and purchase food. As data comes in from the first round of Economic Impact Payments, we need to carefully analyze the positive impact of these payments and seriously consider whether they are needed as a long-term response to the massive disruption and structural changes to our labor market as a result of not only COVID-19, but automation and artificial intelligence.

Provide Extension of Unemployment Benefits

Millions of Americans have suddenly lost their jobs through no fault of their own, and many will not be able to find paying work in the coming days and months. Although the Cares Act provided \$600 a week in federal unemployment, these benefits only last until July 31 and must be extended. Restaurants, barber shops, theaters, large scale sporting venues, and hundreds of other businesses are likely to remain closed or underutilized for months. Without additional unemployment compensation, those Americans who can no longer work in these jobs will not be able to provide for themselves.

HELPING ENSURE EVERY AMERICAN IS READY TO CONTRIBUTE

Increase SNAP

Millions of Americans are in an unexpected financial crunch. We must help lower-income and vulnerable Americans by increasing Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program funding in order to feed the neediest families in our country. During the economic downturn caused by the pandemic, SNAP benefits should be increased 15 percent, the minimum monthly benefit should be increased from \$16 to \$30, and harmful rules that limit eligibility should be abandoned.

Mitigate Disparate Health Impacts due to COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted in tragic terms the vast health disparities for both access and outcomes. Federal and state governments should dramatically expand access to health coverage. Limits on Medicaid eligibility for immigrant families should be waived, Medicaid access should be expanded to all low-income Americans, COBRA coverage should be subsidized, and Healthcare.gov should extend a special pandemic open enrollment period and additional subsidies for those who have lost their source of income. No one in America should go without health coverage during the pandemic. COVID-19 is primarily thought of as a respiratory illness, but doctors around the world have noted damaging impacts to the heart, kidneys, liver, nervous system, digestive system, and blood clots associated with stroke in even young and otherwise healthy individuals who have tested positive for the disease. We do not yet know the long-term health impacts this disease will have on those who have recovered from serious illness or even those who have experienced only mild symptoms. The risk posed by this disease only further underlines the need for every person in America to have affordable access to comprehensive health coverage and care.

HELPING ENSURE EVERY AMERICAN IS READY TO CONTRIBUTE

Expand Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Credits

Increasing the Earned Income and Child Tax credits will allow lower-income and working families to keep more of their money and spend it on essential needs.

Extend and Make Universal Paid Family Leave

If employees are not offered paid leave, they will more likely return to work when sick and further spread the coronavirus. The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (H.R. 6201, P.L. 116-127) expanded paid leave protections for small business employees by providing up to two weeks of paid leave with a possible extension of 10 weeks at two-thirds pay when staying home to provide COVID-19 care to themselves or their families. However, millions of American workers are left out of current law. While many large businesses provide some level of family leave, we should expand family leave to provide universal benefits for all Americans. A recent study from the University of California, Berkley found that only eight percent of essential grocery, pharmacy, and other essential hourly workers had access to at least 14 days of leave. If our priority is slowing the spread of this virus, we must allow sick employees to stay home without penalty.

HELPING ENSURE EVERY AMERICAN IS READY TO CONTRIBUTE

Improve Outreach to Communities of Color and Immigrants

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on racial and language minority communities. The federal government must collect and report extensive data about these affected groups and direct additional resources to these communities. The government should meet the reported needs by providing health care resources and services to these communities. In addition, we must ensure that all communities have access to food, COVID-19 testing, and affordable medicines. Efforts must be made to communicate with limited English-proficient Americans in their native languages to explain how to access government benefits including small business loans and unemployment benefits.

Freeze Mortgages and Evictions

Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and the Federal Housing Administration are permitting borrowers to defer their mortgage payments for up to one year. However, this moratorium on mortgage payments does not apply to the majority of people paying rent or mortgages. The federal government needs to provide all borrowers experiencing extreme hardship during this crisis with temporary relief from mortgage payments and evictions. Assistance should be provided to borrowers that would permit them to at least make partial payments, which payments are often reinvested by landlords to make structural improvements and repairs to residential buildings.

HELPING ENSURE EVERY AMERICAN IS READY TO CONTRIBUTE

Protect Americans in Long-term Care Facilities

COVID-19 is putting older Americans and people with disabilities living in long-term care facilities at heightened risk. As of April 25, 2020, in Florida, there have been 2,748 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in 356 long-term care facilities among residents or staff, 299 have died. They account for approximately nine percent of all Florida cases and 28 percent of deaths in the state. All levels of government must do more to protect vulnerable Americans living in long-term care facilities. Long-term care in America is underfunded, understaffed, and was clearly unprepared to face a global pandemic. We must demand additional transparency from long term care facilities and in turn, be more transparent with the American people about the preparedness of nursing homes, assisted living, rehabilitation hospitals, and other communities that present difficult challenges for controlling the spread of infectious disease.

Support State and Local Governments on the Frontline of COVID-19

Our nation's state and local governments have been on the frontlines combating the pandemic. Paramedics, public health officials, sanitation workers, police officers, firefighters, teachers, and other state and local government employees have been working tirelessly to administer aid in communities and to make sure our neighborhoods are healthy and safe. State and local government employees have taken great risk to help our neighbors. Many have died from the virus. State and local governments are in desperate need of replenishing the funds they have used to combat the pandemic. State government need more than \$500 billion to fill the gaps in lost revenue. Local governments are in need of more than \$100 billion to cover costs of confronting the pandemic. In addition, local governments with 500,000 people or fewer people need to be eligible for financial assistance that has been made available through the CARES Act.

TARGETING HELP FOR STUDENTS AND YOUNG AMERICANS

For students in schools now closed by the COVID-19 pandemic and for recent graduates and other young adults, the challenges posed by this crisis have the potential to shadow their lives for years or even decades to come. Despite also losing jobs, incurring unexpected travel expenses, and losing access to on-campus resources, we made the mistake of failing to provide them with the direct payments most Americans received in the CARES Act. We are spending \$3 trillion to help current employees, which is the right thing to do, but young people are holding billions in student debt and deserve urgent help as well.

We have the responsibility to ensure that the great potential of this generation is not squandered as a result of the immensely difficult academic and economic challenges they face.

Provide Individualized Tutoring to Struggling K-12 Students

At-home learning has been difficult for students, parents, and educators. The challenges are likely to widen the existing disparities between wealthy and lower-income students. We could address this challenge by creating a national program to encourage states and school districts to hire full-time tutors. These tutors could provide individualized or small group help in-person to students during the school day once classes resume. Building off of an idea proposed in the America Reads Challenge Act in 1997, tutors could be trained and assigned to work with students who score Below Basic on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. These tutoring jobs have the added benefit of employing recent college graduates in jobs critical to our nation's long-term success.

TARGETING HELP FOR STUDENTS AND YOUNG AMERICANS

Pay -- Rather than Suspend -- Monthly Student Loan Payments

While suspending student loan payments through the CARES Act has provided some relief to millions of Americans, much more is clearly needed. The greater than \$1.64 trillion student debt has been a massive drag on the economy well before the pandemic. By paying student loan obligations during the national emergency, we alleviate some of this burden while ensuring no American is set back in paying off their loans through no fault of their own.

Reduce Interest Rate for Ongoing Student Loan Payments

As we work to push out hundreds of billions of dollar in forgivable and low interest loans to businesses, we must also look to reduce rates on outstanding student loans. With these low interest loans, businesses can refinance their debt and save much needed money. With over \$1.6 trillion in outstanding student loan debt, these borrowers deserve to benefit from the current low rates as well. We must allow students to refinance their federal loans at these lower rates without losing the protections these loans provide.

Extend CARES Act Student Loan Protections to All Loans

To ensure the roughly 13.8 million Americans with federally backed, rather than direct federal, loans are treated fairly, we must also extend these benefits to all federal loans

TARGETING HELP FOR STUDENTS AND YOUNG AMERICANS

Provide Additional Loan Cancellation to Frontline Workers

During this national health crisis, our frontline workers are putting their lives at risk every day. In the case of our healthcare workers, many are only able to do their life-saving work because they have taken on some of the heaviest student debt burdens. We should make a down payment on the debt we owe all our frontline workers by providing them with additional student loan forgiveness benefits during the pandemic.

Create a Task Force to Meet the Needs of Students and Young Adults

Looking forward, we should establish a task force focused on young adults, our future leaders. Too many young adults feel disconnected from their government and feel that Washington does not care about their issues. Echoing recovery efforts following the Great Recession, the massive COVID-19 response packages rightfully provided hundreds of billions of dollars to support the current generation of workers; unfortunately, they largely overlooked the next. The task force must give students a seat at the table now to ensure their voices are heard.

ASSERTING GLOBAL LEADERSHIP TO RESTORE OUR ECONOMY

Our best efforts to fight this virus at home cannot succeed if we are not also fighting it abroad. The United States has led the world out of every major modern crisis, and that leadership now is critical to our ability to successfully rebound from the economic impact of COVID-19. The World Trade Organization estimates trade will decline between 13% and 32% in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with 2021 expected recovery dependent on the effectiveness of the global response. Our recovery depends very concretely on restoration of trade and global commerce. We will not be able to fully restore economic stability in our country until the spread of the virus is under control globally.

Restore Funding Cut from Global Health and International Programs

According to the CDC, 70% of the world is underprepared for a public health emergency. Robust U.S. funding for global health programs can help combat the continued spread of COVID-19. The United States must restore cuts to humanitarian funds, particularly in areas like water, sanitation, and hygiene; increase funding for international organizations doing emergency response work; shore up the State Department's operating ability through Diplomatic Program funding; increase USAID's operating funds and response capability through additional International Disaster Assistance funding; and replenish international financial institutions.

ASSERTING GLOBAL LEADERSHIP TO RESTORE OUR ECONOMY

Restore Lifesaving Health and Humanitarian Assistance to the World's Vulnerable Populations

We have the scientific and technical expertise to assist others with their pandemic responses. The CDC is experienced in helping other countries meet international health standards for global health security. America should be engaged as a leader in bringing the wealthiest nations of the world together to aid the most vulnerable populations.

Leverage Our Position in the World Health Organization

As we work to investigate China's early misinformation and correct missteps in the initial World Health Organization (WHO) response, we must continue to fully fund the WHO and other International Organizations charged with coordinating emergency health response. It is imperative that all countries receive accurate, real-time information. Efforts must begin now to reform and strengthen the WHO's capabilities.

Prevent Nations from Profiting off the Pandemic

China has already sought to capitalize on the instability created by this pandemic by increasing its efforts to use soft power to manipulate the narrative of COVID-19 response. The United States must lead our allies in countering China's influence. This will require coordination among partners to provide necessary resources and prevent a duplication of efforts. China is sending medical equipment across Europe and offering humanitarian aid in Africa and Latin America. Now is not the time to pull back the U.S. diplomatic or assistance presence. Only a strong and engaged America can lead the global response to this pandemic.

ASSERTING GLOBAL LEADERSHIP TO RESTORE OUR ECONOMY

Use the G7 Presidency to Spearhead a COVID-19 Response that Benefits America and the World

The United States holds the presidency of the G7 this year. It is a platform that our country can use to organize the most advanced economies in the world. The U.S. must work to ensure the G7 Leader's Statement of March 16, 2020 is fully implemented. In particular our focus should be on enhancing efforts to strengthen health systems and make medical equipment available where it is most needed; coordinating real-time information and intelligence sharing, including coordination with online platforms to combat misinformation; increasing coordination on research efforts, including joint public and private partnerships; mobilizing the full range of monetary policy tools, including coordination between central banks to support economic stability and growth; working with international monetary organizations to design and implement financial assistance; and addressing disturbances to international supply chains and trade. The United States is strongest when working together with a thriving network of allies and partners.

Encourage Real-time Sharing of Best Practices to Reopen Safely and Effectively

As countries in varying stages of pandemic response begin to relax lockdown measures and reopen their economies, the U.S. should ensure that the weekly meetings of G7 health and finance ministers outlined in the March 16 statement focus on real-time sharing of best practices. The United States must lead the effort to share successful health and economic strategies with other partners, including G20 countries, to coordinate successful response strategies from the international community.

ASSERTING GLOBAL LEADERSHIP TO RESTORE OUR ECONOMY

Increase the Focus on Global Health Security in National Security Strategy

In the longer term, we must ensure global health security is a critical part of our National Security Strategy (NSS), building on the foundation established in NSS-2017 to combat biothreats and pandemics. We are living through the proof that a global pandemic like COVID-19 can be just as devastating to America's economy and people as any war or military conflict. Our ongoing planning and defense strategy needs to reflect this hard-learned lesson.

ENSURING SAFE AND SECURE ELECTIONS

It is our responsibility to ensure that every eligible voter is able to participate in an on-time 2020 election. This will require state and local governments to make significant changes now to ensure a safe, secure, and fair election in November. The federal government has a duty to support states in this preparation, to help fund the costs of the massive changes required, to ensure that all eligible citizens can vote and have their ballots counted, and to prevent any attempts to use the changes required by COVID-19 to suppress eligible voters.

Establish Universal Vote-by-Mail Option for All Voters

To ensure that Americans who would be most at risk from voting in-person can still contribute their voices in our democracy, we must encourage all states to establish a universal vote-by-mail option or expand their current vote-by-mail system. The federal government should require states to maximize voters' ability to request and utilize mail-in ballots in light of the challenges posed by COVID-19. Expanded vote-by-mail options must be accompanied by significant investments in voter education. Local and state governments would also be wise to consider that an increased interest in vote-by-mail options due to the pandemic may significantly increase the need for printed and absentee ballots.

Provide Adequate PPE for Election Workers

It is not realistic to expect that every state will be able to fully adopt a vote-by-mail system that is accessible to all voters in time for the election. This means that protecting the right to vote for all Americans will also necessitate safer in-person voting. For all in-person voting, states and localities must prepare to have appropriate PPE for all election workers and volunteers.

ENSURING SAFE AND SECURE ELECTIONS

Expand Early Voting in Every State

Decreasing the number of people who gather to vote in-person on Election Day can also be accomplished by expanded early voting, which is already in place and popular in many states. States with experience in early voting – like Florida – have seen that in-person early voting sites themselves can be very crowded on certain days and at certain times. An expansion of both days and hours for in-person voting tailored to the prior experiences of those localities will be tremendously useful in spreading out the number of voters at any one location at any one time and greatly improve the safety of our voting process.

Train and Recruit Additional Poll Workers

Because many polling sites are staffed by retirees and other older Americans who may be at increased risk of serious illness from COVID-19, state and local governments need to act early to recruit and train additional workers and volunteers. Jurisdictions could consider innovative programs to staff early voting and Election Day polling sites by hiring Americans who are out of work due to this pandemic on a temporary basis.